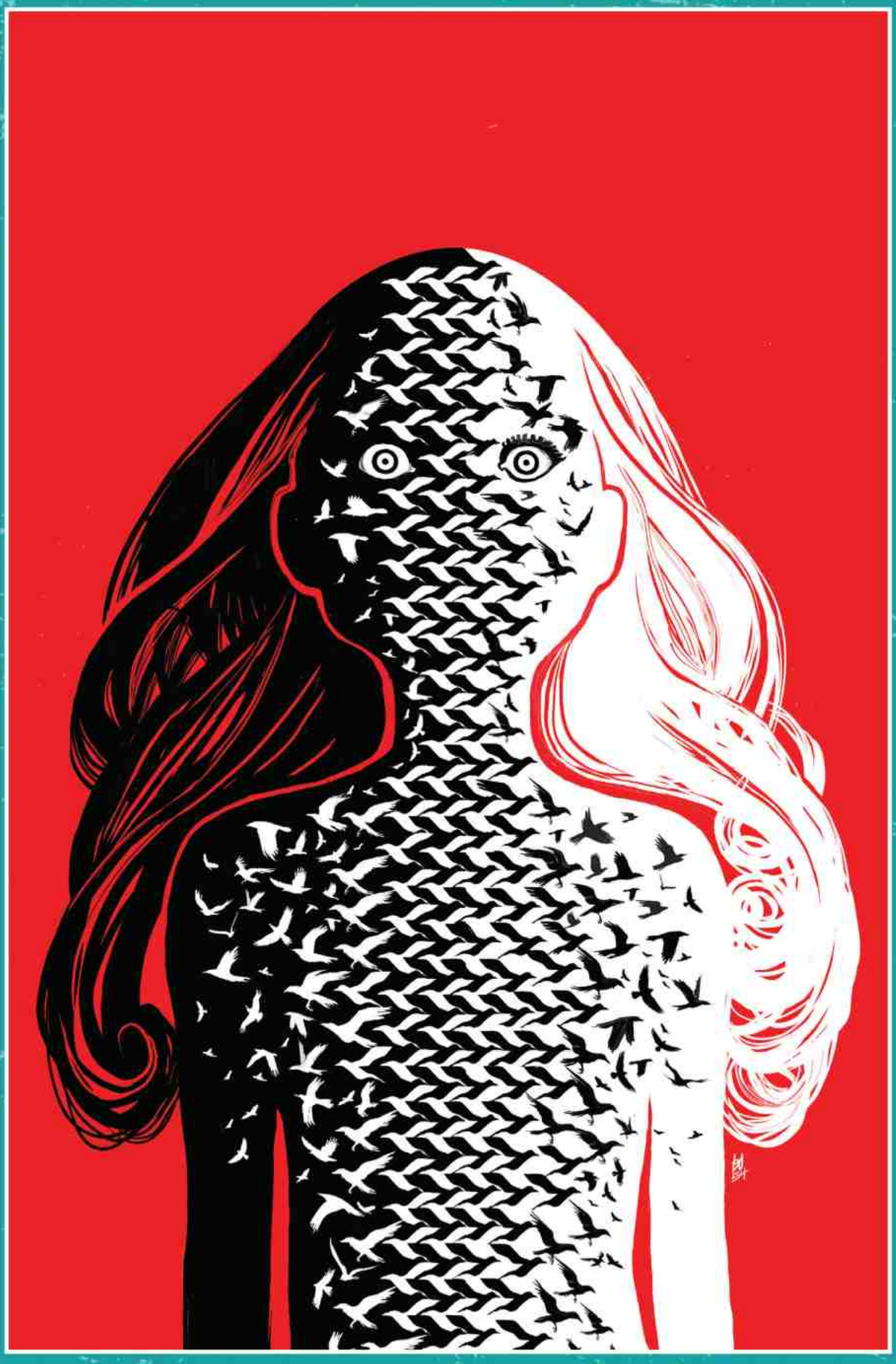
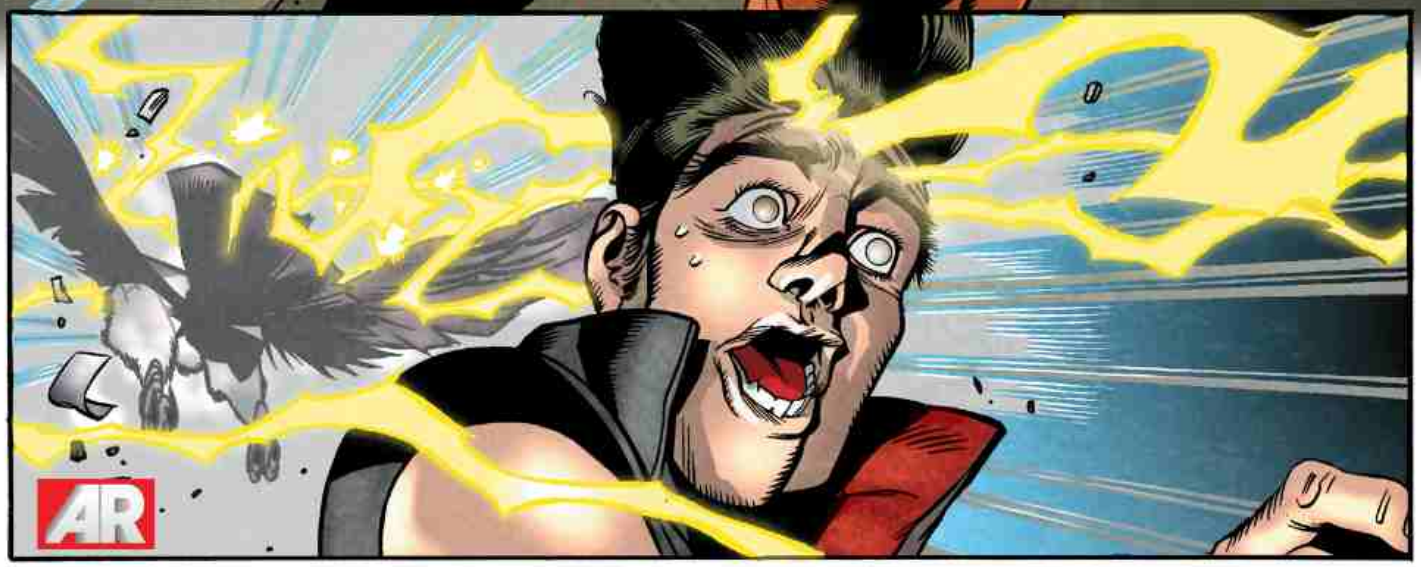


THREE

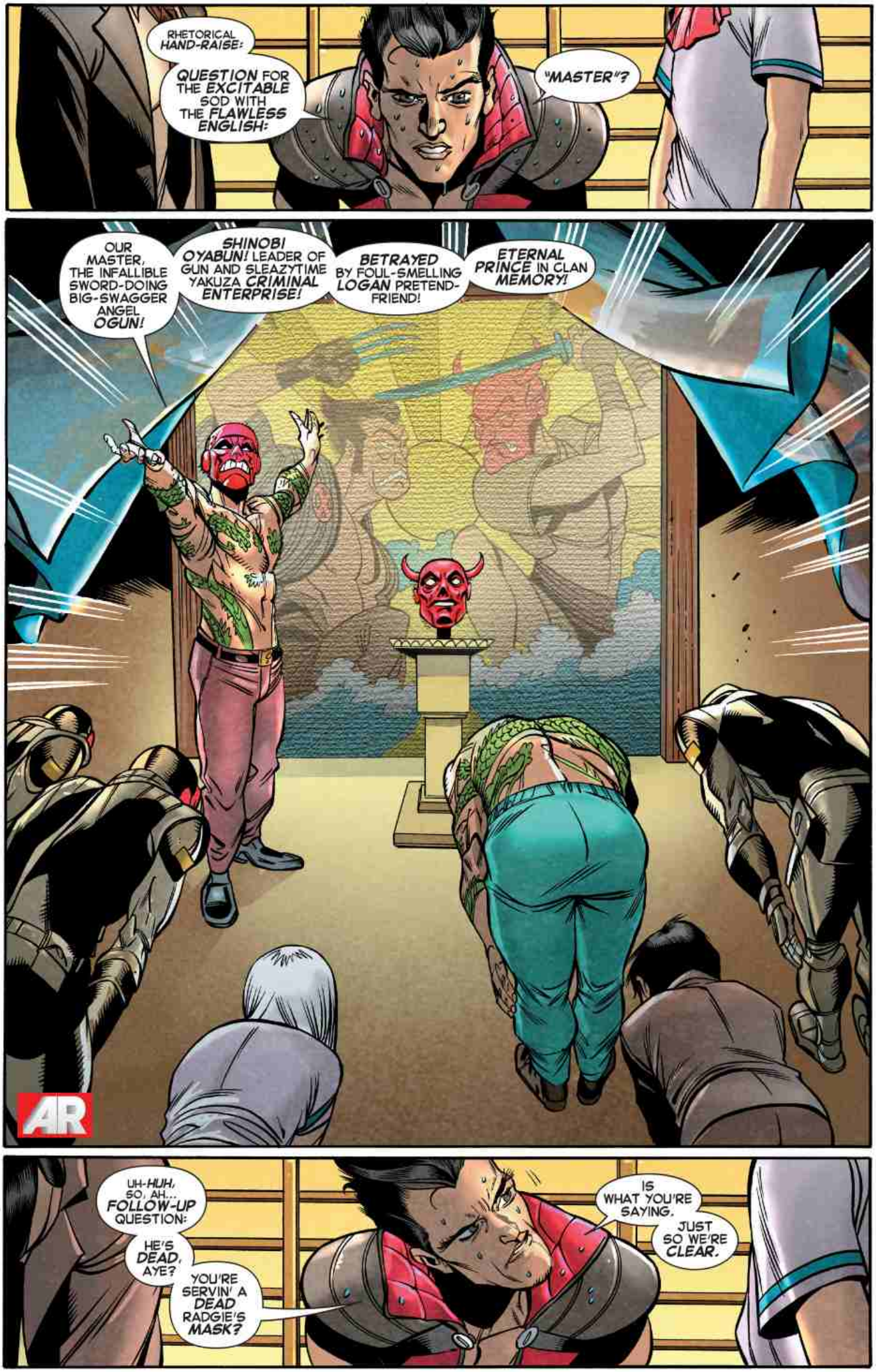
LISTEN:
A SECURITY GUARD IN CHENGDU FALLS ASLEEP AT HIS POST.
AN AIRLINE STEWARDESS WAVES ABOARD A VISITING ROCK STAR, NO QUESTIONS ASKED.
A CUSTOMS OFFICIAL AT HANEDA NODS AT AN INVISIBLE PASSPORT.
GETTING TO JAPAN WAS THE SIMPLE PART.
SEE, IN THE PRISON RIOT THAT PASSES FOR MY SUBCONSCIOUS I'VE RECLAIMED MY FIRST ERRANT EGO.
MINE IS THE POWER OF TELEPATHY, OH YES, AND YOU'D BE AMAZED HOW EASY FOLKS CAN BE LED, OR LED ASTRAY.
YOU'VE GOT TO WONDER: IS THIS HOW DAD FELT THE WHOLE TIME?
ANYWAY, AYE: GETTING HERE WAS SIMPLE.
WH--
STAYIN' ALIVE HERE MIGHT BE THE MORE COMPLICATED AFFAIR.
W-WINGS.
DOES NOBODY ELSE HEAR BLOODY WINGS?!
KABUCHIKŌ DISTRICT, SHINKJUKU WARD. TOKYO.

FOUR DAYS AGO I LEARNED OF TWO IMPRISONED MUTANT KIDS SOMEWHERE NEAR HERE, BY READIN' THE MIND OF A SENTIENT PAIR OF EYEBALLS.
LONG STORY.
RESCUING THE POOR WEE BUGGERS SEEMED THE SORT OF THING DAD WOULD'VE DONE, SO...Y'KNOW. HERE I AM.
DID A PSI-SCAN OF COURSE-- MOMENT I ARRIVED. REACHING OUT...TASTING FOR MUTANT MINDS...
AAA!
OHHH, THEY WERE FAINT-- TOO FAINT FOR THE SPANDEX BRIGADE, I'LL BET, USING DAD'S OLD CEREBOLLOCKS TECH OFF IN WESTCHESTER--
FAINT, AYE... BUT I FELT THEM.
I FELT THEM, AND THAT WOULD'VE BEEN AN EASY FIRST STEP IF NOT FOR THE CREEPY FEELING THAT THEY FELT ME TOO.
LIKE...WAITING. LIKE THEY WERE READY.
LIKE ADMIRAL-BLOODY-ACKBAR'S FAVORITE ONE-LINER.
OHNO.
IT'S A TR--

ACTUALLY IT'S A BLOODY GREAT AETHERIC PROJECTION SHAPED LIKE A MONOCHROMATIC PSYCHIC RAVEN, BUT EVEN STAR WARS CHARACTERS DON'T SAY #%&@ LIKE THAT OUT LOUD.


AR

SPLOSH
AAAAA COLDCOLD COLDC--
OH--
BEHOLD, PITIFUL GAIJIN, MIGHTY TIGER-POUNCE LEADERS OF YAMAGUCHI-KAI CLAN, GUNS-ALSO-DRUGS SELLING, ALSO WOMAN-SLEAZYTIMES TO HIRE!
TREMBLE, GAIJIN, AT KARASU-TENGU ALSO SOJOBO-TENGU, HEIRS TO RADIANT MASTER'S KING-BUTT-PLACEMENT-SEAT!
WE RECEIVED A PHONE CALL. ANONYMOUS.
THAT A MUTANT PSYCHIC WAS COMING TO DESTROY US.
IN NAME OF RADIANT MASTER, THE GAIJIN WILL TELL YOUNG HEIRS WHO SENT HIM HERE, TO SPARE LINGERING DEATH!
BUT... AREN'T, UH...
AREN'T THE YOUNGSTERS THERE MEANT TO BE THE ONES TIED UP?
I...I'M PRETTY SURE THAT'S HOW IT WAS IN THE EYEBALLS' BRAIN.
THIS IS ALL VERY CONFUSIN'.
...
THE FOREIGNER APPEARS TO BE INSANE, FUTATSU-SAN.
MUST WE REALLY TORTURE HIM?
SILENCE! YOU DISHONOR STAR-LOVELY RADIANT MASTER BY DOUBTING CLAN CHOOSING!


RHETORICAL HAND-RAISE:
QUESTION FOR THE EXCITABLE SOD WITH THE FLAWLESS ENGLISH:
"MASTER"?
OUR MASTER, THE INFALLIBLE SWORD-DOING BIG-SWAGGER ANGEL OGUN!
SHINOBI OYABUN! LEADER OF GUN AND SLEAZYTIME YAKUZA CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE!
BETRAYED BY FOUL-SMELLING LOGAN PRETEND-FRIEND!
ETERNAL PRINCE IN CLAN MEMORY!
AR
UH-HUH, SO, AH... FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:
HE'S DEAD, AYE?
YOU'RE SERVIN' A DEAD RADGIE'S MASK?
IS WHAT YOU'RE SAYING.
JUST SO WE'RE CLEAR.

...UH.
THE GAIJIN DOES NOT UNDERSTAND. VERY FOOLISH! NO RESPECT. MAKE MISTAKE TO COME HERE!
MINIONS TO FETCH VILE PIGDOG SCUM!
THIS RATMAN! KOKUSUI-GUMI! RIVAL TO RADIANT OGUN-CLAN! WITNESSES REPORT HIS CRIME:
IN RAMEN CAFE, GINZA DISTRICT, SAYS OUT LOUD NOTFUNNY JOKE! SAYS RADIANT MASTER OGUN ONLY WORE MASK TO NOT SHOW CROOKED ALSO YELLOW TEETH!
LAUGHS AT OWN JOKE!
KARASU! SOJOBO! PLEASE TO SHOW NOTNORMAL-HAIR MAN WHAT IS FATE FOR SLIMEPIG INSULTING MEMORY OF RADIANT MASTER!
P-PLEASE, FUTATSU-SAN...
WE DO NOT WANT TO HURT THIS MA--
IMPUDENTING! THINK OF OYABUN OGUN! GREAT LEADER WHO TOOK YOU IN!
SAVED AS BABYTWINS FROM POVERTY ALSO DEATH! RAISED IN GLORIOUS YAKUZA-CLAN LIKE OWN SON ALSO DAUGHTER!
WHAT HELL IS WORSE THAN NOT-TO-MAKE-HONOR IN DEBT?
AND SO.
SO THE POOR WEE SODS BEND THEIR NECKS, TAKE A LONG BREATH...
AND BLOODY DO IT.

POURING THEMSELVES TOGETHER. CREEPY CARRION-BOTHERERS MADE OF SMOKE AND STEAM. SPIRIT-RAVENS.
SEE, TIED UP OR NOT I'M STILL CHANNELIN' THE WEE PSYCHIC BEASTIE IN MY MIND--
OW OW OW OW OW
SHUT IT.
--SO IT'S NO BOTHER TO SEE A LITTLE DEEPER.
AS THEY RIP AND TEAR. AS THE ETHERBLOOD POURS.
AS A HUMAN FORM WITHOUT FLESH HOWLS AND MOANS BEYOND SOUND. AS THE MAN WHO OWNS IT SPASMS AND GOES STIFF LIKE A GLASS WITHOUT WATER--
--AND AS THE KIDDIES I CAME HERE TO SAVE--
TEAR
APART
HIS SOUL.
I'M SORRY.
I'M SORRY.
...

NOT SO VERY FAR AWAY.
B-DIP
B-DIP
B-DIP
YEAH. UH-HUH.
NAH. NO NAMES, TOO RISKY. JUST LISSEN.
YOU GOTTA COME QUICK. IT'S THE PAINTBRUSH-HAIR GUY.
HE'S TRYINNA TAKE THE CHILDREN! HE SAYS HE'LL HURT 'EM! HE'S MAD! HE'S $@#%&$# MAD, Y'HEAR?
THE IRIS HOUSE! MEIJI GARDENS! TOKYO!
HURRY!
HEH--
AN' THE $@#%&$# OSCAR GOES TO...
CLNK
THROW IT AND DIE, STARSMORE.
WE GOT A LEAD.
LET'S HUSTLE.

IN THE END, THE SHOUTY GOOGLE-TRANSLATION GOONS GET BORED AND SOD OFF. "GET INTO HIS BRAIN," THEY SAY. "FIND OUT WHO SENT HIM! THEN KILL HIM!!"
NOBODY BOTHERED TO JUST BLOODY ASK. THE HARD WAY IT IS, THEN.
T-TELL ME... THIS LIFE... THIS JOB YOU DO...
...DO YOU ENJOY IT?
ALAS, THE HARD WAY'S ALSO THE SLOW WAY-- ALSO THE MAY-NOT-WORK-AT-ALL WAY--SO I'M DOING MY BEST TO KEEP THE WEE DEVILS DISTRACTED WHILE I WORK.
SEE, TELEPATHY'S PRETTY USELESS FOR ESCAPES-- 'SPECIALLY WHEN IT'S BUSY DEFLECTING ASTRAL AVIFAUNA--SO INSIDE THE QORTEX COMPLEX I'M WATCHING THE CROWD...
YOU WASCALLY WABBITS...
ALL MY SICKNESS-- ALL MY BUGNUT CRAZY--LAID OUT LIKE A #&@$%&# MONSTER HUNT.
THE ORIGAMIST. ONE OF THE TOP DOGS.
HYAAAAA!
A REALITY-CHANGER. A SPACE-FOLDER. AS DIVERGENT-EGOS GO THEY DON'T COME BIGGER, FATTER, DUMBER--
--OR STRONGER.
AAAAA!
THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH HUNTING IN A MENTAL MENAGERIE: YOU ONLY GET THE ONE SHOT.
IF I BEAT THEM, THEIR POWER'S MINE. THEY BEAT ME, IT'S MY BODY UP FOR GRABS-- AND THE UNIVERSE UNDER THE AXE.
THE WORST ELMER-BLOODY-FUDD EVER FACED WAS AN EXPLODING BUNNY-BOMB.

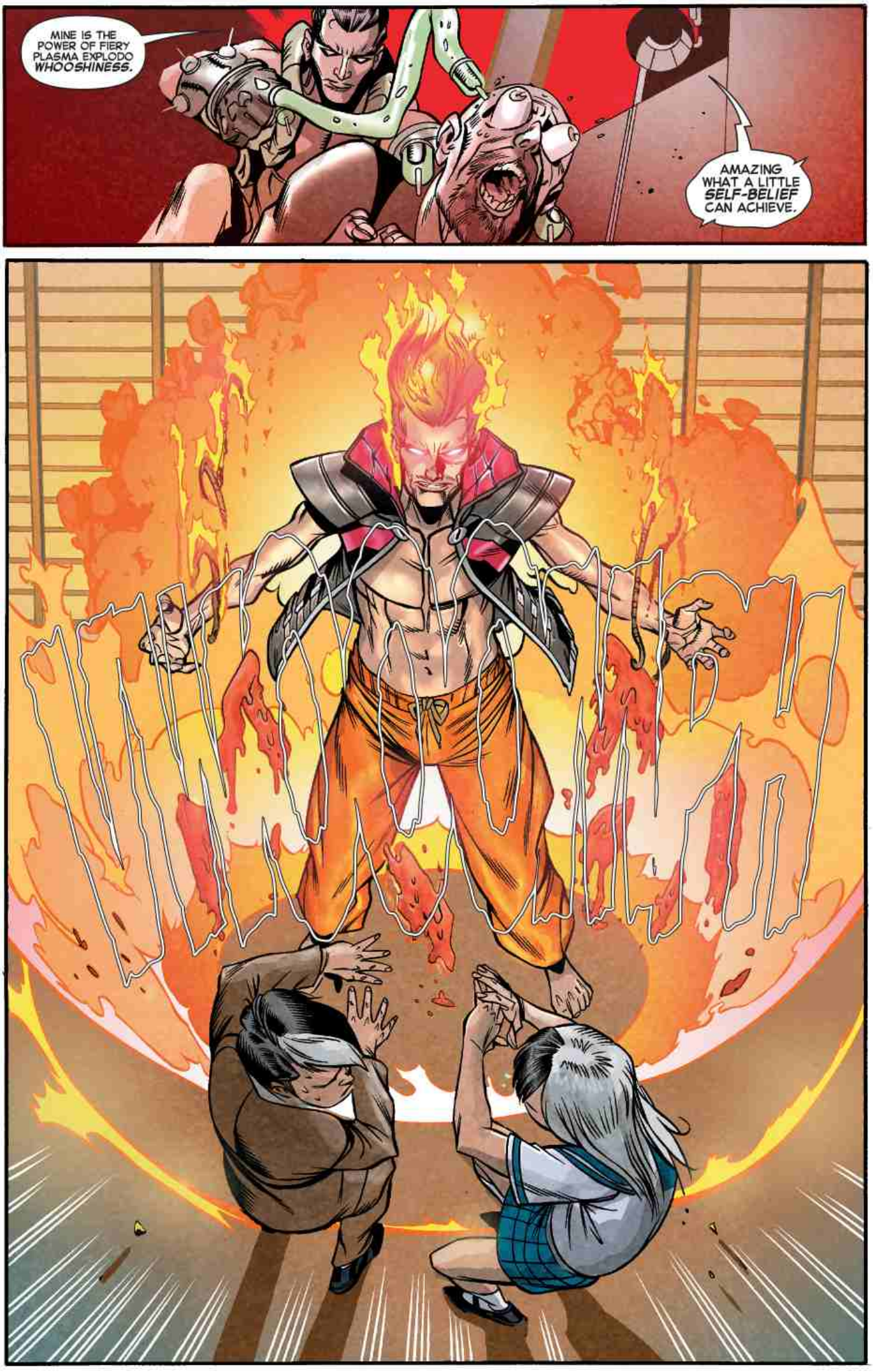
DO WE ENJOY IT? OF COURSE NOT.
I-IT'S REVOLTING. IT MAKES US FEEL BAD.
TH... THEN WHY DO IT?
...YOU'RE GAIJIN. IT WOULD MAKE NO SENSE TO YOU.
WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT YOUR WAYS. YOU DO WHAT YOU WISH. YOU HAVE NO RESPECT FOR THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE.
NO OBLIGATION TO HISTORY. NO DEBT TO YOUR FORBEARS.
YOU WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND.
... I MIGHT.
OKAY. SO MAYBE TARGETING THE ORIGAMIST WAS A TAD OVERAMBITIOUS FOR A FIRST ATTEMPT.
CROTCHETY OLD MAX KELVIN'S MORE MY SPEED.
WALA WALAWALA WALAAAAA AAAA
OR NOT.
CRAP CRAP CRAP

L-LISTEN, PLEASE. SOMEONE'S WORKING AGAINST ME HERE. I'M NO THREAT TO YOU OR YOUR BLOODY CLAN. I...I CAME HERE TO HELP.
S-SEE, MY FATHER--HE'S DEAD NOW--HE LOOKED AFTER PEOPLE LIKE YOU.
PEOPLE LIKE US, S-SO I JUST THOUGHT I'D...Y'KNOW...
WE'RE VERY CLOSE TO BREAKING IN, MR. HALLER. WE CAN ALREADY TASTE YOUR CONTRADICTIONS. FOR INSTANCE:
IN WHAT WAY DID YOUR FATHER "LOOK AFTER" YOU, MR. HALLER?
I'M LATE FOR THE U.N.
YOU'D BETTER ANESTHETIZE HIM, MOIRA--JUST 'TIL I'M BACK. IT'S THE KINDEST WAY.
FOR EVERYONE.
...NOW WHERE DID I PUT THAT SPEECH...?
ATTEMPT 3. TIME TO GET SNEAKY.
THE CHRONODON STUMBLES INTO A DAVIDBAIT TRAP.
...AND PROMPTLY STUMBLES DIRECTLY BACK OUT.
I CAN FEEL WINGS BEATING ON THE WALLS OF THE PRISON.

YOU'RE... YOU'RE YOUNG. TOO YOUNG TO BE MUDDLED UP IN... ALL THIS.
RETRIBUTION. CRIME. VIOLENCE.
WHATEVER DEBT YOU MAY OWE MR. CONSTIPATED-SNEER OVER THERE, THIS IS NO LIFE FOR CHILDREN.
MM. AND SINCE YOU'RE SO KEEN TO FOLLOW IN YOUR FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS, MR. HALLER--
YOU ARE, AREN'T YOU?
AREN'T YOU?
--WE CAN'T HELP BUT WONDER WHAT ALTERNATIVE HE WOULD'VE OFFERED.
COME NOW. IT'S CALLED THE DANGER ROOM FOR A REASON.
UP.
AAAA!
ATTEMPT 4. GETTING A WEE BIT DESPERATE NOW. SEE ALSO: FREAKED OUT, CONFUSED, AND SEVERELY RUBBED IN THE REGION OF A RAW NERVE.
PUKATUS JR. REPRESENTS PRETTY MUCH THE LIGHTEST OF THE LIGHT OPTIONS.
GOT YOU GOT YOU GOT YOU.
HAVEN'T GOT YOU HAVEN'T GOT Y--

THE POINT IS--
WHAT'S THE POINT, DAVID?
--THE...THE POINT IS, JUST BECAUSE YOUR... YOUR FATHER-FIGURE GOT ONE OR TWO THINGS RIGHT--
SAVING US?
RAISING US?
TRYING TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE FOR MUTANTS?
A-AYE...
DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE HE WAS BLOODY INFALLIBLE.
DOESN'T MEAN YOU HAVE TO DO THINGS EXACTLY THE SAME.
GUESS WHAT I'M S-SAYING IS...
HE WASN'T THE BEST FATHER. O-OGUN, I MEAN.
THAT'S NOT WHO I MEAN.
HE DIDN'T GET EVERYTHING RIGHT.
AND IT'S OKAY TO TRY AND BE DIFFERENT.

IT'S OKAY TO TRY AND BE BETTER.
H-HIS... HIS DEFENSES, THEY'RE...
YES. F-FIRMER.
BIGGER--
SSSSSSSSSS
BOOM!F
BOOM!F
STRONGER--
GET OVER HERE.
MAX KELVIN AGAIN.
SECOND TIME LUCKY.


MINE IS THE POWER OF FIERY PLASMA EXPLODO WHOOSHINESS.
AMAZING WHAT A LITTLE SELF-BELIEF CAN ACHIEVE.

H-HE'S FREE! CALL THE GUARDS!
NO! THEY'LL BE ANGRY! WE MUST RECAPTURE HIM OURSEL--
I WON'T FIGHT YOU.
YOU ASK ME? YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE TO FIGHT AGAIN.
WE'RE NOT DISSIMILAR, YOU KNOW.
YOU TWO. ME.
BASKING IN A DEAD SHADOW. SCREWED-UP IN ALL KINDS OF EXCITING WAYS BY LOVE 'N' RESENTMENT.
YOU KNOW WHAT I'VE LEARNED?
WHAT... WHAT YOU TWO HELPED ME SEE?

YOU DON'T GET TO BE *PERFECT* JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE *DEAD.*
AND *EMPTY THINGS* AIN'T WORTH *INHERITIN'.*

HE'S LOOSE!
LISTEN: I DON'T MEAN TO... TO SPEECHIFY. I JUST WANT TO HELP MY PEOPLE.
I WANT TO HELP THE #$%@&#* WORLD-- AND THERE REALLY IS NO WAY OF SAYIN' THAT WITHOUT SOUNDIN' STUPID. HUH.
I WANT TO HELP YOUSE TWO. IF YOU'LL LET ME.
FWOOMF
NOT BECAUSE OF DAD. NOT BECAUSE OF THE BLOODY DREAM.
BUT... BECAUSE YOU'VE HAD A CRAPPY DEAL OUTTA LIFE AND IT'S ABOUT TIME SOMEONE FIXED IT.
LOOK, I DON'T HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. I'M A #$&%@*# MESS, TRUTH BE TOLD.
I DON'T KNOW IF I HATE MY DAD OR WORSHIP HIM--
--AND I IMAGINE YOU KNOW HOW THAT FEELS--
BUT... SOJOBO...
KARASU...
...I THINK... I THINK THERE'S A SORT OF WISDOM IN ADMITTING YOU'RE IGNORANT. MAKES THE THINGS YOU DO KNOW MEAN A HELLUVA LOT MORE.

WHAT I KNOW IS THIS: CHILDREN SHOULD HAVE CHILDHOODS.
PEOPLE SHOULD HAVE CHOICES.
GENES SHOULDN'T MATTER A SINGLE FIGGY #$%&.
AND NOBODY SHOULD EVER BE FORCED TO FIGHT IF THEY DON'T WANT TO.
MAYBE WE... WE START OUR OWN SCHOOL. MAYBE WE DISAPPEAR-- I DON'T KNOW.
BUT WHATEVER IT IS, IT'LL BE EASIER LEARNIN' IT TOGETHER.
WH... WHAT DO YOU SAY?
WE AGREE. YOU HAVE AN OLD BRAIN.
AND A YOUNG GHOST. WE WISH TO COME WITH YOU.
AYE? THAT'S GR--
LEGION.
THIS HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH.
RUMBLERUMBLERUMBLERUMBLERUMBLERUMBLERUMBLE

STEP AWAY FROM THE KIDS.